

# What does Good Volunteering Look Like?

## A Vision for Volunteering in Lancashire in 2026



Produced with help from the Lancashire 12 Volunteering For Health Place Based Partnership, The Lancashire 12 Volunteer Managers Forum and input from volunteer stakeholders, residents and the VCFSE sector throughout Lancashire 12

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Blackpool, Wyre

Angela Bennett

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Art work (right)  
'where I volunteer'  
by Gannow Urban  
Warriors, Youth Action  
volunteers

Front page artwork  
'Who is my CVS?'  
by Holistic Future  
Pathways project for  
Confidence and  
Wellbeing



## Glossary of terms and acronyms:

ABTT, Association of British Theatre Technicians

BPRCVS: Burnley Pendle and Rossendale Council for Voluntary Service

CEO, Chief Executive Officer

CV, Curriculum Vitae

CVS: Council for Voluntary Service (an infrastructure organisations)

CYAG, Colne Youth Action Group

DCMS, Department for Culture, Media and Sport

DWP, Department for Work and Pensions (includes job centres)

GP, General Practitioner (doctor at local surgery)

HR, Human Resources

ICB, Integrated Care Board

KAVS, Kings Award for Voluntary Service

LACVS, Lancashire Association of Councils for Volunteering and Volunteer Centres.

Lancashire 15, consists of the 2 unitary councils of Blackburn with Darwen council/ Blackpool Council and the 12 non unitary councils Burnley/ Chorley/ Fylde/ Hyndburn/ Lancaster/ Pendle/ Preston/ Ribble Valley/Rossendale/ South Ribble/ West Lancashire/ Wyre plus the county council (Lancashire County Council)

Lancashire 14, consists of the 2 unitary councils of Blackburn with Darwen council/ Blackpool Council and the 12 non unitary councils Burnley/ Chorley/ Fylde/ Hyndburn/ Lancaster/ Pendle/ Preston/ Ribble Valley/Rossendale/ South Ribble/ West Lancashire/ Wyre

Lancashire 12, consists of the 12 non unitary councils of Burnley/ Chorley/ Fylde/ Hyndburn/ Lancaster/ Pendle/ Preston/ Ribble Valley/Rossendale/ South Ribble/ West Lancashire/ Wyre

LCC: Lancashire County Council

LGA Report, Local Government Association Report

LIQA, National Local Infrastructure Quality Accreditation

LOCAL, project run by LACVS

LSC VCFSE Alliance: Lancashire and South Cumbria Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise Alliance: work together to build partnerships aiming to establish the sector as a valued partner within the health and care system.

LVO, Lead Volunteering Organisation [Quality Accreditation]

MA, Masters Degree in Arts

NAVCA, National Association of Voluntary and Community Action

NCVO, National Council for Volunteer Organisations

NEET : A young person who is Not in Education, Employment or Training

NHS: National Health Service

QAVS, Queens Award for Voluntary Service

SEN, Special Educational Needs

UK, United Kingdom

UKSPF, The United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (government funding)

VCFSE: Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector

VCSE, Voluntary Community Social Enterprise Sector

VCQA, National Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation





## Introduction

Good volunteering is evident across the Lancashire 12 geography, we see it in our every day life, however how often do we stop to think, how has this happened and how can we ensure the positive impact it has can continue?

During 2025 and 2026 the LACVS Volunteering for Health programme has been gathering insights, case studies and information around volunteering, Alongside the LACVS LOCAL team we have been looking for gaps in communities, helping to set up VCFSE led forums and place based partnerships to connect and enable conversations to happen.

We are at a pivotal place for volunteering across Lancashire with many changes geographically and politically, we have top down changes affecting peoples lives and we are in the middle of a healthcare, employment and economic crisis where the VCFSE sector are being called upon to support. We needed to look at how we can support the volunteer sector to thrive during these times and what blockers and barriers are our there and how we can work on priorities to support our communities.

This vision and strategy shows us how great VCFSE support is and could be going forwards, and where it fits in alongside the NHS 10 year plan, local and regional government re-structuring, boundary changes, and more. We pose questions for you to think about and see if you are part of the solution and most importantly showcase what great volunteering looks like.

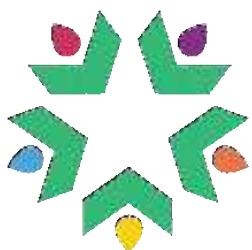
This is a fluid document and we continue to gather information. The draft infographics were put out for consultation in April—June 2026 and led to this final document, to be launched in Volunteers week 2026 across Lancashire 12.

It has been clear that the areas without VCFSE sector infrastructure have not engaged and do not thrive as well as areas with infrastructure in place, in some areas of Lancashire there have been infrastructure organisations for over 90 years, and this has been apparent through levels of community action and development.

About the VCFSE Sector in Lancashire12

- Lancashire (14) is home to an estimated 10,800 VCFSE groups, including around 2700 charities, 5540 unregistered/ unincorporated groups and 2540 social enterprises
- As such, we estimate that unregistered/ unincorporated groups such as small community groups are likely to make up around 51% of the VCFSE sector in Lancashire
- We also estimate that social enterprises most likely account for around 24% of Lancashire’s VCFSE sector
- There are likely to be around 20,895 people working in the VCFSE sector in Lancashire
- There are likely to be around 208,850 people who volunteer once a month in Lancashire
- The VCFSE sector contributes over £609m each year to the Lancashire Economy. This includes over £143m from volunteering and a contribution to the Lancashire economy through employment that exceeds £465m.

Figures from the LACVS manifesto for Lancashire 2022 [1.1]



**LACVS**  
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES



In Lancashire, we have 3 areas referred to as Lancashire 15, 14, and 12 which represent specific parts of the county grouped by geography:

- Lancashire 15 covers all fourteen geographical regions of Lancashire and the County Council (LCC)
- Lancashire 14 represents all of Lancashire's fourteen geographical regions
- Lancashire 12 represents all of Lancashire's twelve geographical regions without the two unitary areas of Lancashire (Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool are unitary districts)

The Volunteering for Health programme is run in 4 regions across Lancashire and South Cumbria:

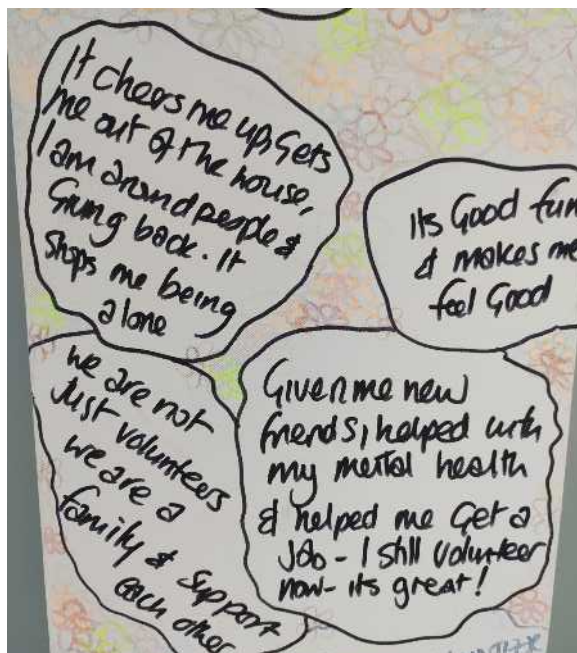
- Lancashire 12
- Blackpool
- Blackburn with Darwen
- South Cumbria

This Vision for Volunteering has been written using data from Lancashire 12 districts, however in some of the projects/ organisations referred to are wider and evidence may refer to Lancashire 14 and Lancashire 15 and south Cumbria.

We have been supported by NHS Teaching Hospitals, NHS Trusts, VCFSE sector, local partnerships and forums, regional partnerships and forums including the Lancashire 12 Volunteer managers Forum, LSC VCFSE Alliance, LCC, DWP, University of Lancashire, LACVS LOCAL team, national VCSE organisations including NAVCA and the NHS Charities team, the Volunteering for Health national network of 15 regions and so many of Lancashire's VCFSE organisations. The continued support with all our partners who have completely got behind this Vision for Volunteering Strategy shows the pride, passion and desire for health volunteering and our amazing VCFSE sector in Lancashire to continue to grow and thrive.

Lancashire County Council tell us:

*'LCC is proud to champion the extraordinary dedication and impact of volunteers across our VCFSE sector, whose passion and commitment continue to transform lives and strengthen communities every day. We remain committed to not only supporting their efforts but actively celebrating their achievements and ensuring they feel valued, recognised, and empowered to make an even greater difference.'*



Artwork asking volunteers 'how does volunteering make you feel?' BPRCVS



*'More than anything we have spent time listening to what people in our communities are telling us, their ideas on how great volunteering, especially health volunteering, can develop. It is key to the future of (health) volunteering. We are committed to continue to listen to our communities and collect insights, which through the Volunteering for Health programme we will share with commissioners, the VCFSE sector, businesses, and those with influence to make Lancashire the shining light of best quality volunteering in the UK.'*

Lancashire County Council signed off on the Civic Pride Action Plan in late May 2026 [1.14], asking partners to sign up to it. It looks at volunteering, environment, people in our community and celebrates local identity and pride in where we live. We see this as a positive step to having the VCFSE sector as an equal partner at the table. The action plan mirrors a lot of our strategy and together this will strengthen volunteering across Lancashire as it shows a willingness to acknowledge volunteers.

The action plan tells us:

### **Volunteers are central to civic pride**

- The plan recognises volunteers as key “community champions” who actively improve local areas and strengthen neighbourhoods. [1.14]
- Everyday acts (e.g. litter picking, helping neighbours, running groups) are seen as the foundation of pride and belonging. [1.15]

### **Recognition and celebration**

- A major proposal is the “Pride of Lancashire Awards” to formally recognise volunteers and community groups. [1.16]
- The council aims to highlight success stories to inspire wider participation. [1.17]

### **Growing participation**

- The manifesto encourages more people of all ages (including young people) to get involved in volunteering and local projects. [1.14]
- It promotes volunteering as something everyone can contribute to, not just organised groups.

### **Partnership approach**

- Volunteers are part of a wider system involving:
- community groups with charitable aims and wider objectives, registered charities / VCFSE sector
- businesses (e.g. staff volunteering)

There is a recognition that the VCFSE sector and infrastructure organisations help to mobilise volunteers, build trust, and connect to people statutory bodies may struggle to engage with. [1.16]

### **Practical local action**

- Volunteering is linked to visible improvements, such as:
  - ◊ Clean up campaigns
  - ◊ maintaining parks and public spaces
  - ◊ supporting events and community hubs [1.18]

### **Shared responsibility**

- The plan frames volunteering as part of a collective responsibility for the place people live—encouraging residents to care for, improve, and take pride in their communities. [1.19]

The Civic Pride manifesto positions volunteering as a core driver of community pride—recognising and expanding local volunteer action, supporting partnerships, and encouraging residents to take shared responsibility for improving Lancashire’s places and communities.

With neighbourhood frameworks also being developed by the NHS currently we feel we have never been in a position where a strategy and plan on volunteering developed by the VCFSE sector for Lancashire has been so imperative.

The logo features the words "STRONGER" and "COMMUNITIES" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Below them, the words "THROUGH VOLUNTEERING" are written in a larger, orange, italicized sans-serif font.

## Methodology

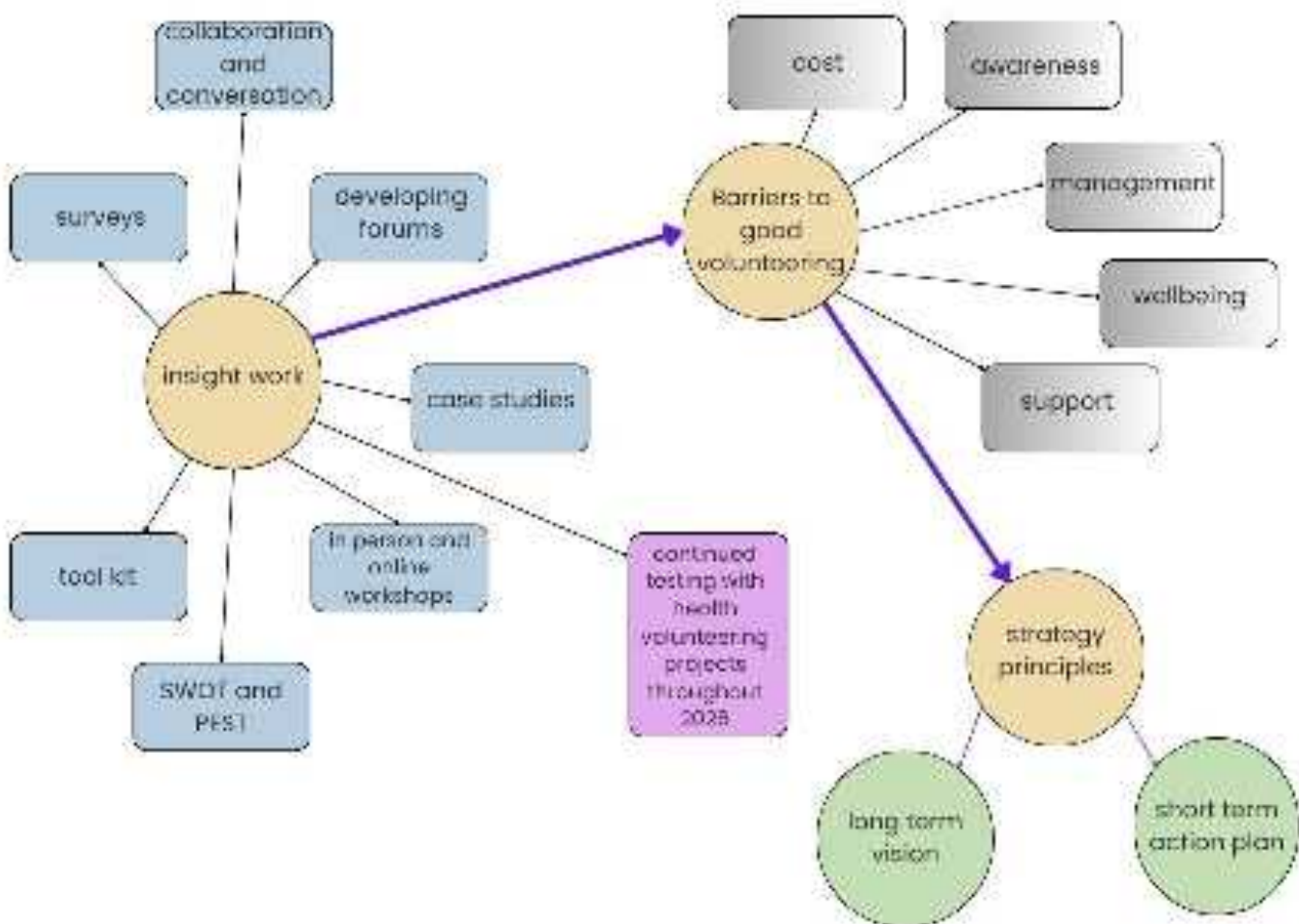
This strategy vision has been a fully collaborative process and the recommendations and plans are based on views of all stakeholders across Lancashire 12. The aim is not producing an all encompassing research document, but to start a process of conversations to develop infrastructure and embed volunteering, especially health volunteering, in Lancashire for the future.

During 2025 the volunteering for health project undertook surveys and workshops to gather insight work. We engaged with many small, medium and large VCFSE groups, volunteers, employees of Volunteer infrastructure organisations and residents of Lancashire 12. We had an amazing response, over the whole of Lancashire and South Cumbria talking and engaging with approximately 1000 people. This led to us identifying areas where we need to look at the infrastructure available, and also gave us information on how residents and volunteer managers feel about volunteering currently.

We developed a tool kit for groups to use to create their own vision and utilised it in face to face sessions. There were recurring themes coming out of the research.

We have looked at barriers/ developed our strategy principles/ leading to our short term action plan and our longer term vision

## Vision for Volunteering Methodology



## Survey Insights

Our surveys were aimed at residents, volunteers and people working with volunteers and VCFSE groups. We spoke in forums, groups, at events and in community settings to enable us to gather information and find directions. As Lancashire 14 and South Cumbria, the same surveys were put out to our communities and along with our in-person and online forum work we engaged with over 1000 individuals.

We asked residents what would help to develop volunteering in Lancashire?



Residents and volunteers were very happy to talk and to have their voices heard. This directly developed a road map of short term actions we can look to develop over the next 18 months. We will continuously evaluate with our stakeholders and quickly respond to needs through this part of the vision. Residents also put a focus on volunteering to career pathways with an emphasis on 'in volunteering experience' and training to develop someone into a paid role. We have seen through work some of Lancashire's CVSs have been doing over the past 5 years the importance of this as a process within the third sector, working in partnerships with training providers and employment support projects. Both Community CVS in Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley Pendle and Rossendale CVS have ran very successful employment support programmes. Approximately a quarter of the people helped into employment through one project were successful on this pathway, the majority of whom were economically inactive, choosing to have no DWP support or were not entitled to support.

Recently the LACVS LOCAL team have worked on developing the DWP work placement scheme into the VCFSE sector. At a regional level the DWP accept the importance of the VCFSE sector enabling job outcomes through volunteering. Something that will be developed during the coming years.

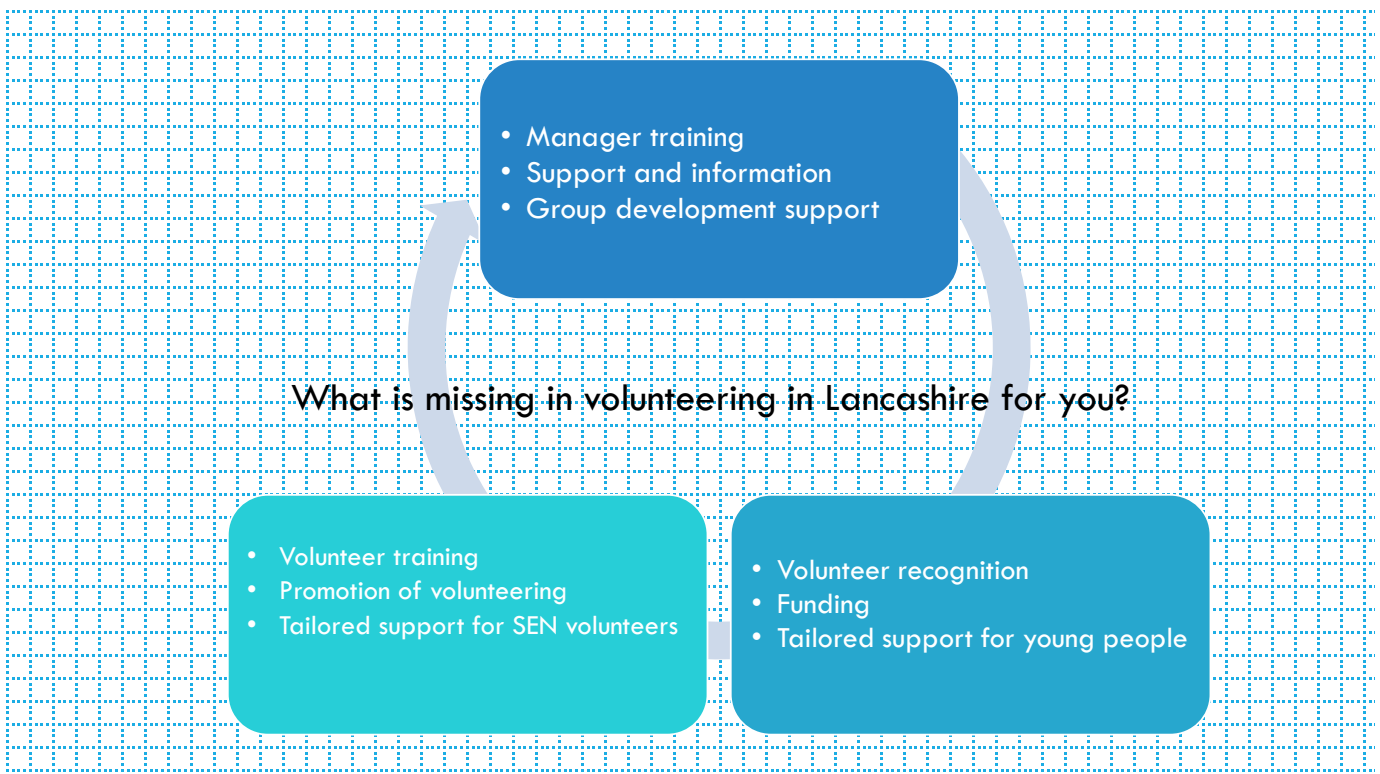
The DWP support volunteering as a pathway to assisting people who are far from the job market into employment. With a 2025 report the Government commissioned [1.2] telling us:

*'Previous literature suggests that volunteering may also increase the probability of employment, acting as a pathway into paid work. This may be due to improvements in human and social capital, as a consequence of activities such as skills training and confidence building. Degli Antoni (2015) conducted an econometric analysis to investigate the effect of volunteering on employment, finding that participation in activities that developed social networks and increased human capital also increased the probability of being employed.'*

However there is no strategy nationally on how the DWP work in partnership with the VCFSE sector. These are future conversations to be had a regional and national level with other partners involved to create a true level playing field.

We asked volunteer managers what was missing from volunteering in Lancashire? We are very aware that often volunteer managers or coordinators are doing this role as part of a wider paid role or in a voluntary capacity. Without the role of an infrastructure organisation speaking on their behalf it can be hard to have their voice heard at local, regional or national level, this is why it is so important we have well funded and resourced infrastructure in all areas of Lancashire. This is something that we currently do not see in all areas of Lancashire. The LACVS LOCAL team are looking to work with the VCFSE LSC Alliance, commissioners to get a voice at the tables to ensure this can happen in all districts alongside the Volunteering for Health project work. For any vision to work we need a multi layered approach, talking at all levels to ensure all voices are heard, messages passed on and received.

From the insights we can see it is massively important for small groups to have a voice at regional and national tables, volunteer managers feel there is a big lack of understanding of the needs of small groups and volunteering in general by funders, NHS, councils, industry and governments and we need to develop further relationships so statutory organisations understand the VCFSE needs and has ways of hearing their voice.



It is not just Lancashire looking at health and community. We have looked at current national projects and the ways they are gathering in and analysing data. The Glasgow based Common Health Assets project [set up December 2025], is a 3 year project seeking to evidence the ways in which community organisations utilise their assets to impact upon the health and wellbeing of their communities. [1.3]

In an assets based approach we do with (not do to) and work with communities to build upon their strengths enabling and growing knowledge and skills of our local people. We aim for people in communities to achieve positive change together, rather than viewing communities as needing fixing due to deficits. We do this through our communities own experience (lived—experience) skills and knowledge. Through growing our forums and working groups, we want to understand how different community organisations support their own unique communities, especially at a time when people are facing massive challenges such as housing (lack of/ expensive), lack of jobs, low incomes and the energy crisis.

## Volunteer to Career Pathway Success

### LACVS Volunteering for Health

Anisa signed with BPRCVS Volunteer Hub in June 2025, having been in education all her life and completing her MA in HR, she had no on the job experience in administration. The volunteer hub contacted the UK Shared Prosperity Steps to employment project for support, and knowing there was a need with LACVS volunteering for Health project for a volunteer data researcher offered her this volunteering opportunity.

During the following 6 months she developed her skills in researching, data inputting, minute writing and learned how to organise meetings using booking applications and developing surveys and collating data.

At the same time the employment support project worked on her employability, crafting a CV and working on cover letters, interview technique and how to research the roles she wanted to apply for. The hub gave her training in Information Governance and Safeguarding, Prevent and Suicide Awareness. She was offered business administration training to sit alongside her volunteering.

Anisa was planning to move to Birmingham in January 2026 and so she widened her search for roles. She applied for a role with Kings Norton Girls School and Sixth Form as their HR and Data Protection Administer. Thanks to the help given through the partnership of BPRCVS Volunteer Hub, UKSPF Steps to Employment, and by volunteering through the LACVS Volunteer for Health Project plugging gaps in her experience, she was successful in the role starting 20<sup>th</sup> January, which fitted perfectly as it gave herself and her husband a couple of weeks to settle into their new home.

*"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for all your support, encouragement and for help with interviews. I genuinely couldn't have done this without you, and I'm so grateful for everything you did to help me get here."*

We are thrilled for Anisa and her family for their new start. The Volunteer to career pathway has shown success time and time again enabling people in all stages of their career to plug those gaps to enable them to become the best person for that role they are interviewing for.

Lisa (LACVS Volunteering for Health Lead for Lancashire 12) and Anisa on her first day of volunteering.



We have seen through this process many great success stories and even through the Volunteering for Health project we have shown it is possible to use a robust Volunteer to Career Pathway to enable people, including young people into employment. The DWP acknowledge the VCFSE is a key stakeholder for them and recognises volunteering as an important tool to help residents gain vital work experience, confidence and skills to enable them to move forward into work. Examples like this showcase the link volunteering has towards careers at all levels.

Through the work already done at LACVS, we have started to make pathways to employment support and support for the VCFSE sector to help with recruiting and retaining volunteers. We are looking at making volunteering in the VCFSE sector easier through creating pathways through the DWP volunteer work placement scheme. The DWP have made it more flexible to work with small groups and the charity sector who often do not work 9-5 Monday to Friday. This piece of work is in conjunction with the DWP and Lancashire County Council. It shows how working with partners and having an infrastructure organisation who understands the needs of our VCFSE sector can grow and enhance opportunities. We have also co produced, with local CVSs and DWP, a volunteers week event to make this easier for the VCFSE sector to access it.

**STRUGGLING TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS?**

*The DWP have a Volunteer Work Placement Scheme which could help your VCFSE organisation*

The DWP are setting up volunteer work placements which can be flexible to your needs in the VCFSE sector in your area of Lancashire.

Supported by LCC and your LACVS LOCAL team, we can help you to find your perfect volunteer whilst getting support through the DWP for volunteer expenses and in developing this into a long term volunteer opportunity, whilst helping your community into employment.



For more information contact LACVS  
lisa.ross@bprcv.s.co.uk

Lancashire County Council | LACVS | Jobcentreplus

**LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS BUT NEED SUPPORT WITH EXPENSES OR RECRUITMENT?**

**THURSDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 9AM-11:30AM**  
**BPRCVS**  
**62-64 YORKSHIRE ST BB11 3BT**

Come along to our Volunteers Week event to find out about the DWP Volunteer Work Placement Scheme.

Book onto a one to one session, then spend time in our networking and refreshments area with our experts in volunteer recruitment.

BOOK YOUR TICKET TODAY – LIMITED SPACES



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT LISA.ROSS@BPRCVS.CO.UK



jobcentreplus | LACVS | BURNLEY, PENDLE & ROSSENDALE Cooperative Volunteer Service

AIMED AT VOLUNTEER INCLUDING ORGANISATIONS IN BURNLEY, PENDLE AND ROSSENDALE

We know from our feedback, volunteer expenses are a significant barrier, especially to smaller groups. Through the work LACVS have done with the DWP we have a possible work around through this volunteer work placement scheme.

Together with the DWP during Volunteers Week 2026, the local CVS and LACVS are delivering an event for the VCFSE sector to talk to [and sign up with] the DWP and their local volunteer centre to be part of this initiative. It has been welcomed by the sector and it is the start of building these relationships

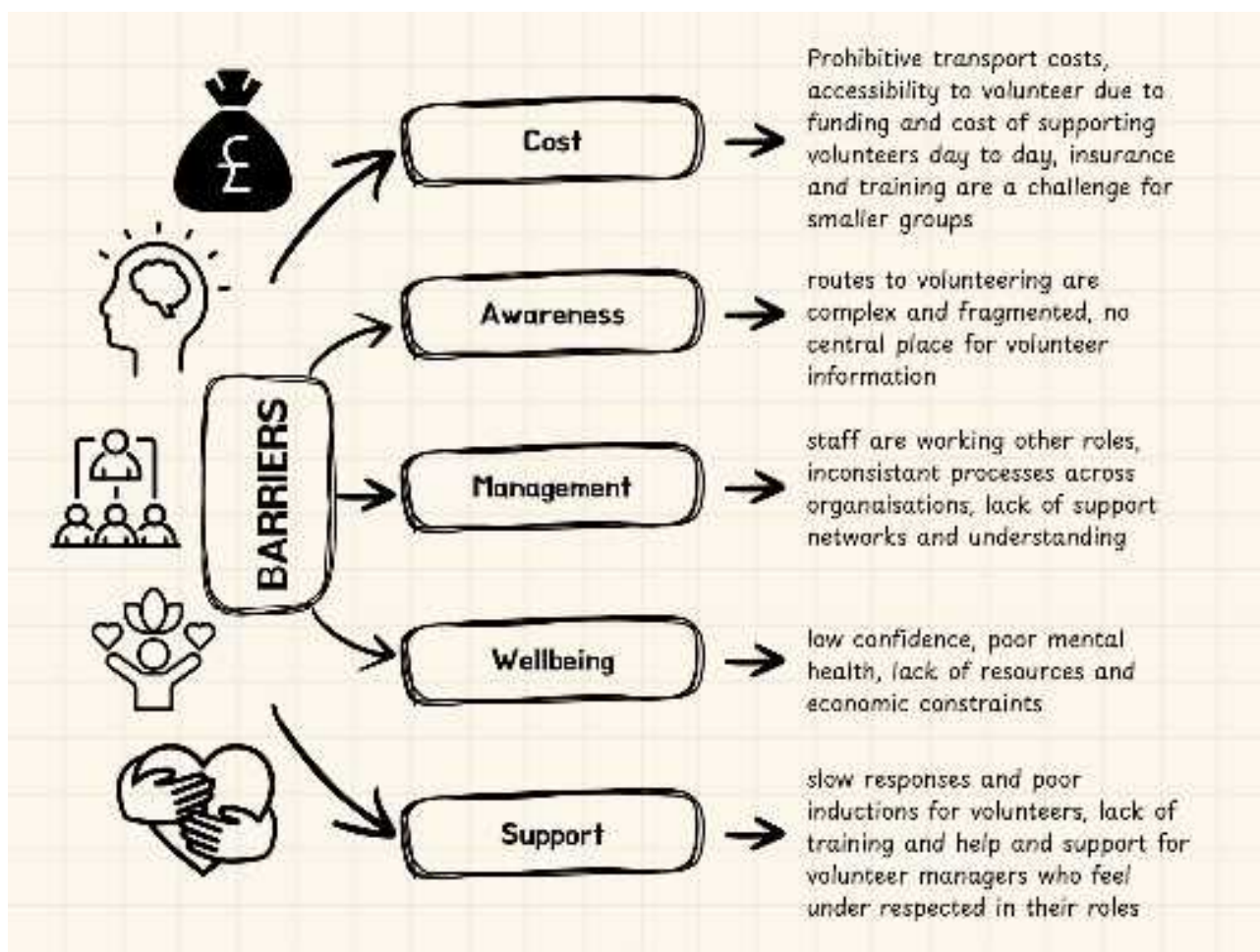
In conversations, the DWP regionally have a hunger to work with not just utilise our VCFSE sector and although no strategy nationally is in place we hope by showcasing partnerships working together regionally we can influence this culture shift not just in the DWP but cascade this way of working out to other services. Without a buy in and equal voice at the table, especially now, in a world of crisis around the economy, poverty, unemployment, NHS, fuel costs, food costs, access to vital services, the VCFSE sector will not be there to support. Not since COVID 19 and the spectacular work volunteers did to prop up the country, has the VCFSE sector been needed more. We are wanting to share best practice as a sector outwards and looking to ensure all volunteering is best practice.

Volunteering for health as a network is very strong, each area has a different take on volunteering and health and we are learning from each other to deliver on a framework of great health volunteering. We will, at the end of Volunteering for Health's learning programme have a national framework we will share to other areas outside of the 15 areas in the pilot. Our aim is for this vision strategy to stand out as the best way forward.

When we look at the already strong partnerships through LSC VCFSE Alliance, Regional and local forums and how in recent years Lancashire's VCFSE infrastructure has been growing and developing, we can see how having a high profile national programme such as Volunteering for Health is a way for us to be noticed for best practice at national level.

## Barriers

From the insights and conversations we have seen themes on barriers to volunteering; from volunteers, residents and those who support volunteers in their roles. These were very much consistent across the region. We can also see how they play to the national barriers seen in many visions for volunteering and strategies at national level. We have considered these in our strategy and vision to enable us to develop a action plan on volunteering in Lancashire 12. It was emphasised during insight workshops that volunteers must not be used instead of paid employees, or out of pocket. We must be mindful people volunteer as a choice, and this volunteering is often not forever as people move on, as our previous case study shows, and this should also be celebrated.



The NAVCA NCVO national vision for volunteering [1.4] shows the following 5 themes they wish to address by 2032:

**Awareness and appreciation**—A future where a culture of volunteering is part of everyone's life and volunteer roles are given the recognition they deserve.

**Power**—A future where volunteers (and the communities they serve) lead on change that matters to them.

**Equity and inclusion**—A future where it's easy for people to give their time and energy to the causes they care about, they feel welcomed, and the benefits are equally distributed.

**Collaboration** -A future where collaboration is natural and spontaneous, where people do great things together because they want to.

**Experimentation**—A future where communities aren't afraid to try new things to develop their own, innovative solutions to engaging and supporting volunteers.

In Lancashire 12 we are seeing the stated 5 themes in our infographic emerging as barriers or challenges into volunteering, which have many overlaps in the themes NCVO National Vision for Volunteering has. The Vision for Volunteering is a national framework - but needs to be understood in a local context to work best for local communities. This is why it is important for us to have a regional vision to understand the local footprint.

Our respondents to the surveys we promoted gave valuable insights into the demographics of our area,

- With 66% of respondents being over 55
- 11% under 34,
- a third of organisations responding offering volunteering to under 16s.
- One third of people who are volunteering being in employment
- less than 10% being unemployed
- approximately half of the volunteers are still in their original volunteer role.
- Nearly 100% told us volunteering is important for society and 39% said volunteer promotion is low in their area.
- We saw that 58% of responding groups and charities have under 20 volunteers,
- 17% have over 100, this shows the importance of supporting these smaller groups who do not get a voice at regional and national tables often.
- With only 8% in a paid, dedicated volunteer manager role.

This data is all backed up from national data from the past few years in the form of national Volunteer Insights

The National Volunteer Insights reveal a mixed picture of volunteer participation in the UK. While some surveys indicate a decline in formal volunteering, others show a slight increase.

- The Community Life Survey found that 17% of adults participated in formal volunteering at least once a month, down from 27% in 2013/14, but up from 16% in 2023/24.[1.5]
- The VCSE Barometer Survey provides insights into the challenges and trends in the voluntary sector, with a focus on recruitment and retention. [1.6]
- The NHS Volunteer Workforce Data Collection aims to track the number of NHS volunteers and their diversity, which is crucial for ensuring that volunteers are representative of the communities they serve. [1.7]

These insights are essential for understanding the current state of volunteering and the factors influencing participation.



Gannow Urban Warriors, Youth Action Volunteers

## Young People and Volunteering

When the barriers we have identified are addressed we see great volunteering happening. One such example is Colne Youth Action Group

We visited Colne Youth Action Group to be welcomed to a space which has been developed to be safe for both the young people and also the volunteer youth workers. They have a café, equipment and space to enable the young people to be in a space they have ownership over. They work with youth who have been let down by the education system, and have a night just for SEN Children. They deliver social skills sessions, cooking and zone in on what is good. They build confidence which was evident from speaking to the young people. The volunteer youth workers told us *'it's rewarding seeing it happen, making those bonds with young people who often do not have a trusted adult at home.'* In the evening sessions all the young people get a meal, they work collaboratively with the other services in Colne to ensure they service the family, with youth workers also volunteering at the foodbank and church youth group. While we were there they were planting vegetables and herbs to use later in the year in their own cooking.

One volunteer said *'I could not imagine volunteering anywhere else, it cheers me up after a stressful day, I could not imagine having another role'* living in the community they volunteer in, the volunteers see the full picture of issues within families and are there to support them through partnership working with social prescribing and the Children and Family hubs.



The volunteers are encouraged to train in Level 2 and 3 youth work, for them it is a passion and a vocation. The volunteer manager, Stacey, feels very fortunate to have such committed volunteers, *'without them this would not happen'*;

however the volunteers are just as aware that without their volunteer manager who is integral to writing funding bids, they would not have a space at all.

Working with their local infrastructure organisation, they have been awarded funding for the SEN class on a Tuesday evening, this enables them to help young people who are NEET/ Autistic and have no focus, together working on ways of learning which suit their needs.

One volunteer who has SEN children said:

*'I would be lost without this as a volunteer and a parent. Having trusted adults around my children has helped them come out of their shells and they are never judged for being themselves.'*

All the volunteers have the same goals and focus, with some working or looking to work in youth work. *'being here has let me bring skills learned into my paid role.'*



CYAG use social media to get messages out, developing the strengths and best practice being shared across the roles, developing previous skills the volunteers have. We spoke to a volunteer who worked as a journalist who decided to leave her role to do something different. She has been volunteering over a year now and sees her lived experience has great value within her volunteering. She engages with the young people and they respond to her in a calm and quiet way. She has now completed

her national youth work training and feels a new direction in employment will be next. All the volunteers agreed training is very important, and adds to their ability to be a great volunteer. They also all understand how important it is to have support through infrastructure organisations. They work with local businesses to help around anti social behaviour with great results, they give young people focus and they also help their volunteers to thrive in and out of their volunteer life.

They succeed due to partnership working and realising issues are not fixed by one route only. They help the families around the young person too and feel the role of the local CVS is pivotal to them creating youth work with impact. They have successfully helped young people back into the school system, avoided health inequalities through hunger and low income and enabled volunteers onto new pathways and into paid employment. Seeing the wider impact this project has shown how it is an example of great volunteering.

One of the young people summed it up:

*'I am no longer making bother in town, I have something better to do and I still get to see my mates and have fun, but I feel calmer and actually have more fun than I did before'*

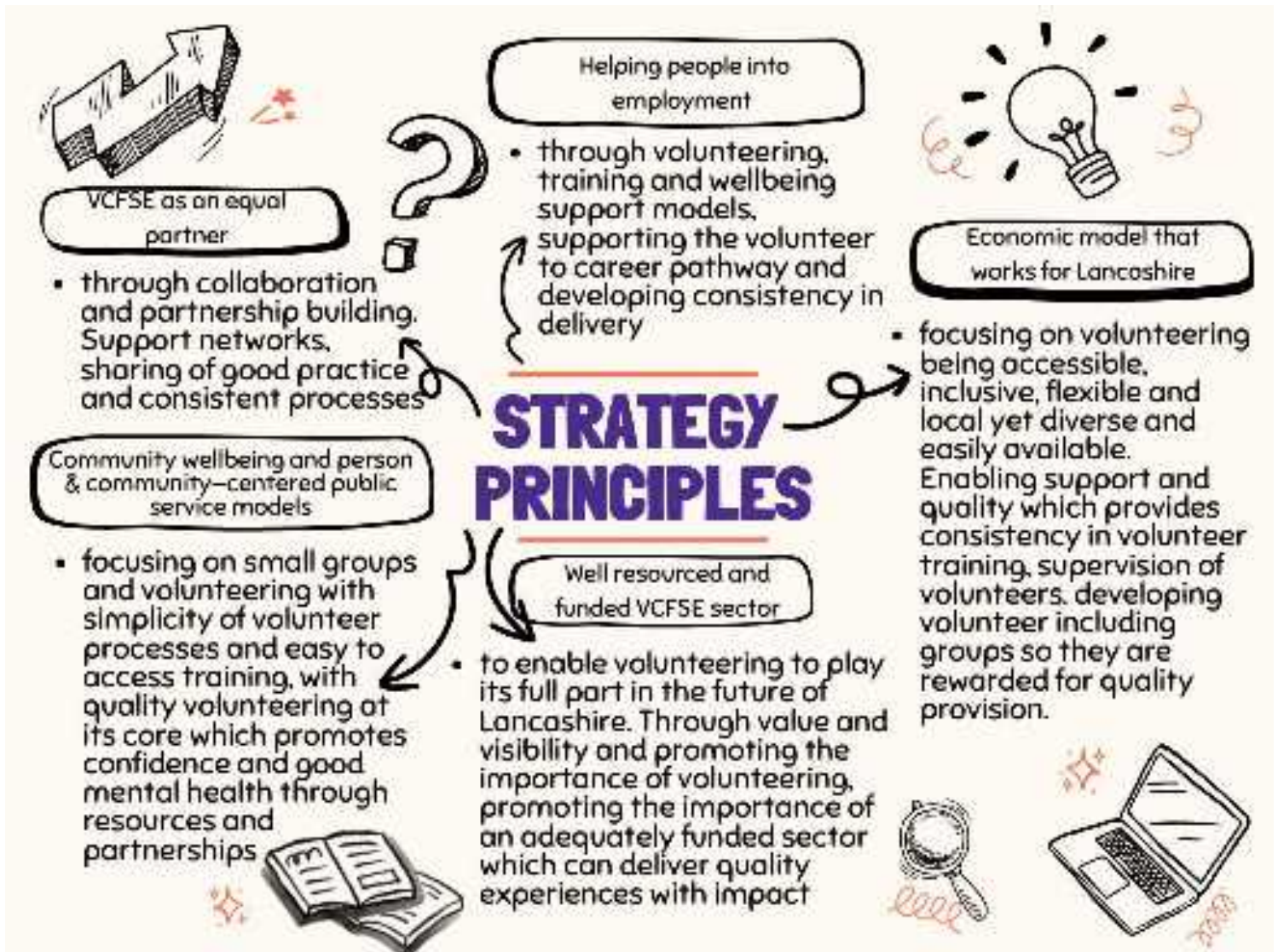
In 2025 a volunteer managers forum for Lancashire 12 was developed by LACVS. As part of this, CYAG have made connections and for Volunteers Week 2026 they will be, alongside their local infrastructure organisation, hosting a volunteer recruitment fair with other volunteer including groups also attending the forum.

Good volunteering has many levels and includes developing relationships as CYAG have with VCFSE, police, DWP, local council, local employers, NHS and most importantly their local infrastructure organisation.

CYAG has developed their volunteer offering around an understanding of services near to them and they enable their young people to have viable futures using these networks.



## Strategy principles developed



From the data gathered and through taking direction from the VCFSE Manifesto for Lancashire, national visions through NAVCA and the NHS 10 year plan, we can see similar economic and social issues showing themselves:

**VCFSE as an equal partner**—collaboration and partnership building. Support networks, sharing of good practice and consistent processes.

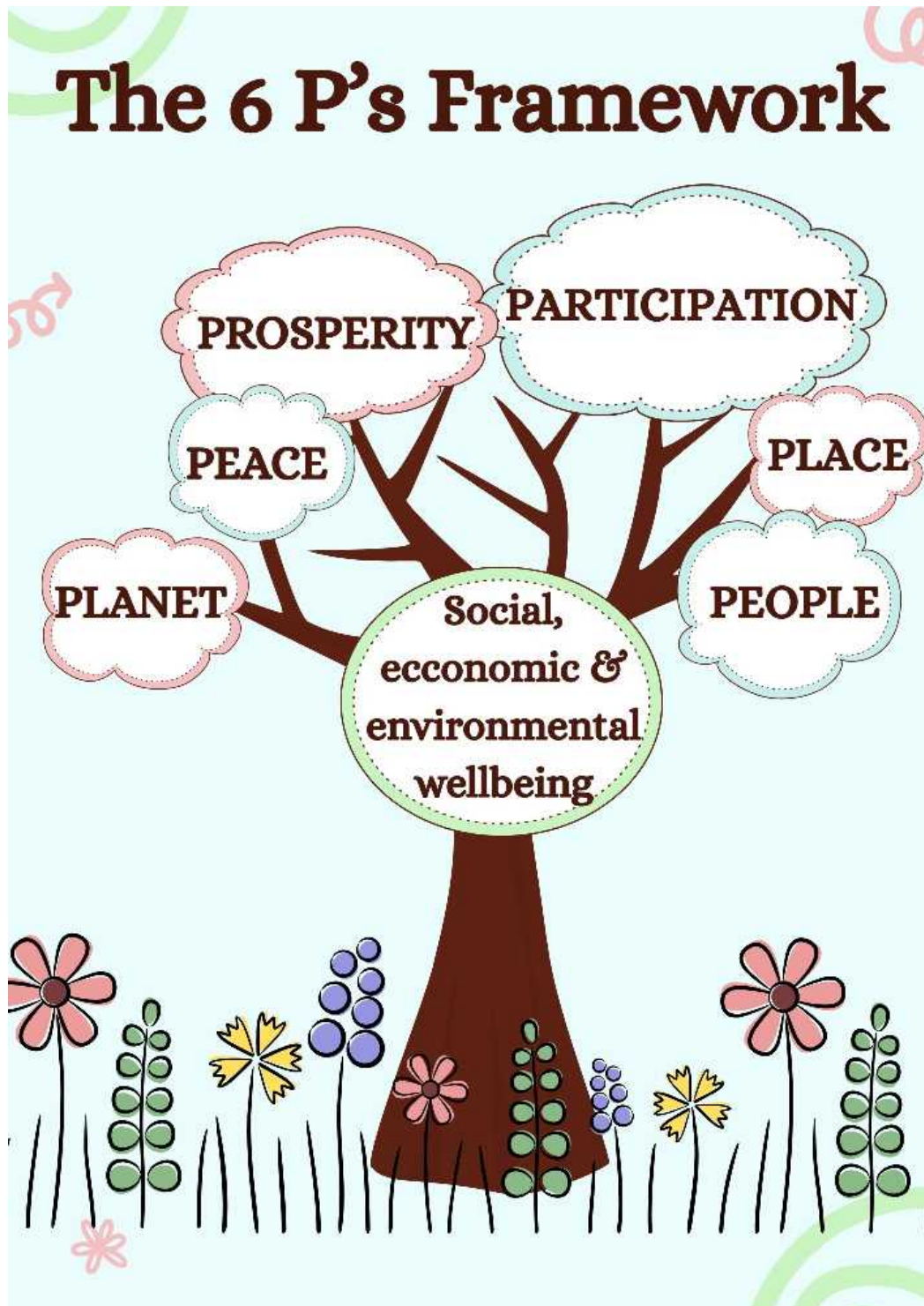
**Economic model that works for Lancashire**— focusing on volunteering being accessible, inclusive, flexible and local yet diverse and easily available. Enabling support and quality which provides consistency in volunteer training, supervision of volunteers and with volunteer including groups being rewarded for quality provision.

**Creating community wellbeing and person & community-centred public service models**—focusing on small groups and volunteering with simple volunteer processes and easy to access training. Quality volunteering promotes confidence and good mental health through resources and partnerships.

**Helping people into employment** - through volunteering, training and wellbeing support models, enabling the volunteer to career pathway, and developing consistency.

**A well resourced and funded VCFSE sector**— to play our full part in the future of Lancashire. Through value and visibility and promoting the importance of volunteering, highlighting the importance of a well resourced and funded sector which can deliver quality experiences with impact.

We can also see how these strategy principles fit with the 6 P's, a framework adopted across Lancashire by some of the CVS's. We use the 6P's as part of an overall approach with VCFSE and volunteering fitting into each of them.



The 6 P's also fit with the case studies in this vision strategy. We can see how the work undertaken by the third sector enables social, economic and environmental wellbeing. LACVS and the infrastructure organisations across Lancashire deliver on the 6 P's. To create social, economic and environmental wellbeing we need to look at this holistically and to mirror with a holistic infrastructure to enable true support for the whole of our VCFSE sector.

The work we see being undertaken by the infrastructure organisations in Lancashire in most cases cover the priorities in their local councils. Due to this we can see the need for infrastructure to be developed in areas where there is none. Evidence indicates we have under funded and resourced volunteer including groups and lack of support for small groups to grow, volunteering at a lower level, a need for the voice of VCFSE sector to be heard (especially small volunteer including groups who do a lot of the health volunteer roles which have most impact).

## Where Infrastructure Fits

The evidence we have collected, and organisations contacted which informs this vision could not have happened without the work done through local infrastructure organisations. Reports collated by one local infrastructure organisation shows they deliver on every local authority priority except one around building housing, showing the diversity of infrastructure delivery.

Infrastructure organisations have the ability to reach groups and communities furthest from the services run through councils, NHS, housing and other statutory organisations. Their main remit is to support all parts of their community for the benefit of social, economic and environmental wellbeing. The LGA report [1.8] shows research around relationships of councils and their local VCFSE stating *'infrastructure support organisations can assist councils to work in partnership with small VCFSE organisations. These partnerships bring benefits to local councils including reaching and engaging with communities furthest from council services, building the capacity of VCFSE organisations to deliver activities and services for local residents, offering flexibility and agility to respond to crisis situations and meeting the needs of minoritised communities.'* In the NAVCA 'pride in place: providing the support infrastructure' document [1.9] there is evidence showing how the VCFSE sector is a core partner to statutory services and contributes significantly toward social and economic value.

It is unrealistic for statutory services to meaningfully interact with all VCFSE organisations across Lancashire [over 10000], so working through a well resourced and funded local infrastructure enables significant benefit to our statutory sector, councils, NHS, DWP, communities, individuals and other members of the LCS VCFSE Alliance. The Local infrastructure organisations in Lancashire sit under the LACVS umbrella as well as being members of the LSC VCFSE Alliance.

The LACVS [and it's members] role includes working across Lancashire and understanding and interacting with the thousands of voluntary, community, faith groups and social enterprises; building relationships across sectors and facilitating partnerships and collaborations; developing partnerships with local councils, health systems, other statutory partners, bringing to the table intelligence, knowledge, assets, skills, and a true lived experience understanding of the needs of the community. [1.8]

NAVCA describes the 4 functions of infrastructure as [1.9 page 4]:

1. leadership and advocacy of and with the VCFSE sector
2. Partnerships and collaboration bringing together VCFSE organisations with each other and with statutory partners including local authorities, VCFSE Alliance and health systems
3. Capacity building for the VCFSE sector
4. Support for volunteering.

We have a very active local infrastructure in Lancashire, facilitating relationships through forums, enabling VCFSE sector to flourish through training, funding, developing best practice, volunteer brokerage, developing projects to fill gaps around wellbeing, employment support, health, and education. They are also very forward looking and work alongside Lancashire County Council, DWP, housing organisations, colleges and universities, local authorities, and the NHS/ ICB. We are aware that without a well resourced infrastructure we will lose a lot of the small groups who prop up the health and wellbeing of their communities. This is well evidence through the work LACVS LOCAL project team have been addressing over the last 3 years.

As part of this strategy we see the importance of having a well resourced local infrastructure at the table of the Health and Wellbeing boards/ ICB board/ VCFSE Lancashire Alliance etc. to enable the voice of our local groups, who are about 80% of the resource we have in Lancashire [1.1] supporting residents, volunteering and to facilitate the wellbeing of the wider communities of Lancashire.

Our conversations with NAVCA, who have been appointed as a member of the Civil Society Covenant Council, will feed into this wider development of partnership strategies. NAVCA report: *'There is more work to do to determine a forward work plan, but my hope is the Council focuses on having greater impact on a smaller number of things, rather than being too scattergun. Commissioning, procurement and culture change in local and national government were top of the priorities we discussed. I will be pushing that the crucial role of communities as well as charities is covered, and for local as well as national government structures to be part of any actions.'* Maddy Desforges NAVCA CEO, NAVCA member newsletter 22/4/26

## Added value of volunteering

The Whitaker Rossendale showcase great volunteering and how there is added value in the most unexpected places. We can see how the strategy principles can be put into place around volunteering through another case study. Helping people to engage in their community with the goal of employment does not need to be formalised, sometimes it can be added value to the funded project.

The Whitaker has have slowly grown their volunteer project over the years and have been supported by their local infrastructure organisation [BPRCVS ] to help promote volunteering offer, support and funded volunteer training opportunities and help with making our volunteering offer first class. They've also had funding support from Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage fund, allowing them to guarantee public transport travel costs for their volunteers. This has been integral to their offer due to the rural area they are situated in and they agree that volunteers should never be out of pocket for their volunteering.

The museum and Art Gallery has many different roles and their volunteers are integral to the day to day running of things. They work in front of house roles at the front desk, shop and room stewarding and are the first faces our visitors are greeted by. Other volunteers work tirelessly behind the scenes when the museum is closed keeping the building and garden areas safe and looking beautiful. Being able to offer this as a resource for the area, educating residents and the community is integral to the work they do. *'Being able to access volunteers through the online brokerage services BPRCVS offer is of great value to us.'*

*'We take on volunteers from all backgrounds, and love to see how people have things in common no matter their differing backgrounds. One our newest and oldest volunteers, Dave has made friends with some of our refugee volunteers from Afghanistan and Syria. When they work on the front desk together, Dave takes the time to practice their English-speaking skills with them and has even bought an Arabic to English phonics book that he works through with them. They bring him in food and have slowly become good friends. It's incredible to see the connections that volunteers of all ages and walks of life make from sitting on the front desk and working shifts together.'*

They Acknowledge that this seems like a small example of people looking after each other, but also see on a larger scale how this will improve the chances of refugee volunteers getting through ESOL, developing their skills to get a job and become a functional part of their community. In enabling more people into work, in an area of deprivation and low employment, is an added value of their volunteering offering. Great volunteering has a wider remit than just the task in hand and this shows it perfectly. In being able to communicate more effectively, this has knock-ons for health outcomes, and integration.

The Whitaker works closely with their infrastructure organisation and engages with their local VCFSE monthly forum to enable them to keep connected to their wider community, They understand the importance of looking after their volunteers and supporting the wider support their volunteers offer.



## Health volunteering in Telephone befriending

The partnership arrangements CVS has with Lancashire County Council's Adult Social Care Team to provide Social Connectors in each area helps to support our communities and highlights the vital role voluntary, community and faith groups play in supporting the health and wellbeing of residents. It has led to the development of a telephone befriending service to run alongside the project. This is a volunteer led project with volunteers ringing up adult social care and social connector referred clients to support residents who are just out of hospital, feeling isolated and unable to leave home.

Feedback is given through Social connectors and link workers around identified gaps in provision. Infrastructure organisations help to tackle them via their own services, funded small groups (examples would be through ICB and Eric Wright funding streams) and by feeding the information up to Health and Wellbeing Partnerships, Councils, and others.

Volunteers on the befriending project reported the sign up process through the volunteer hub was a positive experience for all; with volunteers coming from all types of backgrounds, some with lived experience of isolation and mental health and others who are looking to do this for progression into employment.

They are all supported around training i.e. safeguarding, health and safety, Information Advice and Guidance, and some taking up volunteer hub courses as well as Level 2 health and social care.

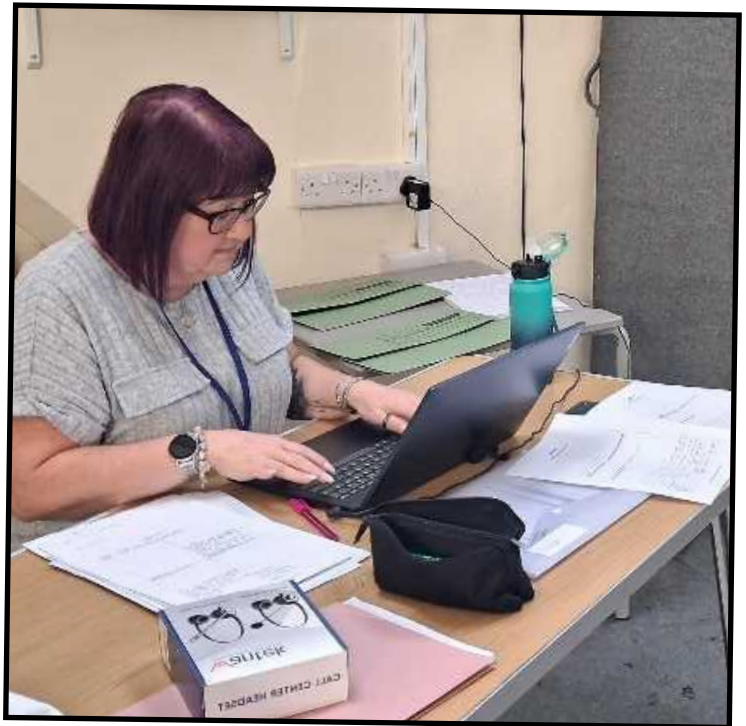
There is an online platform for initial enquiries to volunteer, followed up by in person support to get that person into their volunteer role.

All the volunteers see the positive impact the project is having on the clients, who see the project as 'a lifeline'.

They feel 'the set up is great and means so much' to those they phone up. The project speaks to the volunteers and gathers in their feelings around how it is run, enabling this to have the excellent outcomes for both volunteers and clients.

The project has recently introduced mentor volunteers to support new volunteers around sign up and best practice, which frees up the social connectors time. The project acknowledges how important it is to give volunteers a sense of achievement and pride in what they do.

*'I like doing this as I feel I am giving back to the community who have helped me in the past'*



One volunteer engaged with a lady who had not been talking to any of her carers or support, the volunteer told us they *'just clicked and spoke for 50 minutes,'* and the lady thanked the volunteer as they felt *'comfortable and safe with them,'* and since then they have spoken weekly, helping the clients world to grow and encouraging them to start to join in with their community. Some of the volunteers understand isolation and how hard it is to feel you have no one to talk to first hand. This lived experience element is helping this befriending project to thrive and grow.

All the volunteers work really well together under the project coordinator who is passionate about the project. *'our coordinator is amazing, nothing is too much and the support is brilliant.'* The project is also changing the lives not just of the residents but also of the volunteers:

*'this project has absolutely changed my life and for the better. I love talking to people, its helped with my shyness. I am going to continue doing this for the longer term and I am now doing training around mental health awareness. I feel so rewarded every time I come in'*

*'Being able to mentor others was a massive breakthrough for me, I never thought I would be able to do that. I am not the most confident person and it has really helped my confidence. I feel really proud that I can help and guide other volunteers. I am enjoying being able to access training and feel this will all help me get a job in the future. '*

In having a project which helps people to leave hospital earlier, to stay out of primary care as their wellbeing is raised, shows a massive impact in the community. This is an example of a relatively low cost project which is having a big impact on NHS and also on future employment for some people who are currently economically inactive and not in the benefits system. It is helping people to train and develop their skills, utilise lived experience and have positive impact on residents in their community.



The project rents rooms in a local community centre which helps the local economy and the VCFSE sector in the area. As the volunteer expenses are covered through the project this enables the volunteers to be able to join in and not be out of pocket. The knock on impacts of a project like this are huge and show just how a well developed and funded project can make positive changes in community.

Looking forward this type of health volunteering will be key to the NHS 10 year plan of Neighbourhoods in the community, and it sits alongside the idea of partnership working we talk about in this vision strategy.

**Communication:**

Enabling communication is key for our strategy vision to be successful long term. We can look at this on many levels, from strategic to operational. Through good communication we aim to empower our VCFSE sector to come together and have a level playing field to discuss in safe spaces the issues they face; ensuring we are a voice for the VCFSE sector at regional and national level, to enable best quality volunteering at all levels.

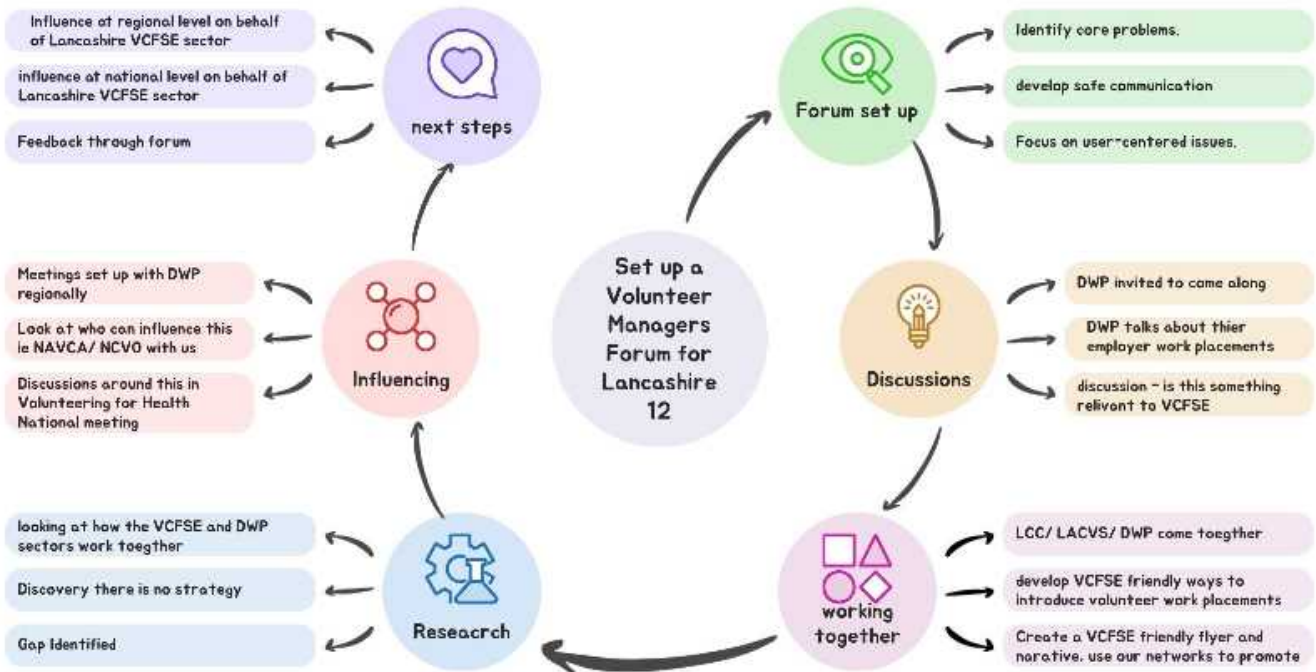
Through the recent development of local place based forums through the LACVS LOCAL team and Infrastructure organisations across Lancashire as well as a new wider Lancs 12 Volunteer Managers Forum which meets monthly online and the LSC VCFSE Alliance, we are increasing the capacity for conversations to happen and develop working partnerships. We do still have some areas of Lancashire without VCFSE led forums or infrastructure and we see their development is key to the future of volunteering having a voice going forward.

Our short term action plans take this into consideration looking at one website for Lancashire which links into all infrastructure. We see through our case studies how important a simple to use online resource to broker volunteers is to both volunteer managers and potential volunteers alike.

We see the development of links between the universities, colleges and schools with the VCFSE sector too, and the appreciation of volunteering.

The Local Government Association is explicit that working with local infrastructure organisations is essential, not optional. Local Infrastructure Organisations enable representative engagement, empower smaller VCSE organisations to overcome barriers, and translate council priorities into effective local action. [1.10]

Here we see how through the set up of a forum we have a culture change around where volunteer work placements are placed by the DWP:



We are seeing a larger number of infrastructure organisations and Lancashire groups getting nationally accredited awards such as LIQA, LVO or VCQA which adds to the strength of best practice in the county. Volunteering for Health will be developing this through developing a kite mark for our VCFSE sector around volunteering, so we can show the best practice and celebrate it across Lancashire.



We see statutory services understanding volunteering and developing their relationships with the sector. Examples of this are the University of Lancashire working with CVSs to introduce modules on community for their medical students and the development of a Community Fellowship Programme. The LSC VCFSE Alliance have been working together over a number of years to build partnerships aiming to establish the sector as a valued partner within the health and care system.



Alongside this, senior team members from CVSs are going out to the universities and give presentations to medical students around social prescribing. This is followed up with groups of medical students spending time in a CVS and visiting groups in the community to see how health volunteering and projects help the community and will be part of their future roles. There has been some amazing feedback around this.



The medical students (Year 3 GP) attend these sessions based in the community to experience health volunteering first hand and also get an insight into the VCFSE sector. This is imperative if we want our future NHS staff to be able to develop relationships as the NHS neighbourhood plans come into fruition [1.11] Medical students commented on the programme:

It is *“important in strengthening our understanding of social prescribing and how BPRCVS operates.”*

*“I really appreciated the opportunity to learn about social prescribing and to see how it plays a vital role in supporting patients’ health an wellbeing beyond clinical treatment. The placement was very valuable and I learned a lot.”*

*“A thoroughly enjoyable and interesting 4 days amongst the community learning about the various volunteering programmes, charitable work and an improved understanding of the sector.”*



*“I learnt a lot about social prescribing and volunteering. Although we learnt about the services provided in theory, observing it being put into practice and how patients benefit from all of this was fascinating. Definitely an eye opener. Everything about this placement was excellent.”*

*“ The placement at BPRCVS proved to be an exceptionally enriching and well-structured experience. The programme offered a thoughtful balance between community insight and practical exposure, allowing for a deeper appreciation of the broader determinants of health within society by letting us visit various communities and talking to charity groups, community groups and people. The teaching that we got from BPRCVS staff was consistently engaging, supported by knowledgeable and approachable facilitators who demonstrated both expertise and genuine enthusiasm. Furthermore, the placement fostered a highly supportive learning environment, encouraging critical thinking, reflection, and meaningful discussion when it comes to community medicine and things that are out there for people to access. Overall it was an immensely rewarding experience that not only enhanced my understanding of public health and societal influences on wellbeing but also contributed significantly to my personal and professional development.”*

Within the NHS neighbourhood plans we need our NHS to listen to VCFSE Infrastructure and understand it. Volunteering for Health is a £10m programme being delivered through a partnership between NHS Charities Together, NHS England, and CW+, for the benefit of NHS as well as the VCFSE sector. A vision strategy for volunteering in Lancashire is key with the NHS introducing neighbourhoods through the 10 year plan [1.12], which, as yet, is not really mentioning how the NHS will work with VCFSE sector or acknowledges that volunteering is not free.

The VCFSE sector is generally acknowledged as great value, it needs resourcing to a level to have impact and make change. Here in Lancashire some infrastructure organisations have over 90 years of experience, are experts in their field and want to help.

We see how being able to add in VCFSE and Volunteering for Health into modules as part of learning for our future GPs adds to future relationship building. Our insight work tell us 71% of volunteer managers feel that the NHS/ ICB/ Health Leaders do not recognise the importance of volunteering in Lancashire 12. We need to change this.

## How Infrastructure Supports the VCFSE Sector Case Sector

### CVS's work with the Morecambe Winter Gardens

Professor Vanessa Toulmin is the Chair of Morecambe Winter Gardens Preservation Trust, she tells us that From 2021 CVS has been helping The Morecambe Winter Gardens with their sixty plus volunteers. The Trust at the time had completed a new governance structure which resulted in two charities, the Winter Gardens Preservation Trust and the Friends of the Winter Gardens amalgamated into one Trust. The CVS advised on the structure they needed in place to run the venue and the Trust purely through volunteers until sufficient resources could be found to bring in staffing to run the venue. This was in three stages.

### A review of our current paperwork and structures



An overview of the training needs required for full governance including future plans and running structures to fully enhance the volunteer experience and bring wider benefit to the Trust and the volunteers. It was recognised that there were two distinct types of volunteer groups – the restoration and maintenance, and the weekend and events team. The last three years have seen a journey where volunteers, including the Trustees have had training, support, frameworks and guidance from Lancaster CVS [1.13]

### CVS - Helping define what volunteering at the theatre is all about.

The Morecambe Winter Gardens Trust received funding from the Theatres Trust to work with the CVS to set up and implement a volunteer framework for the volunteers. This process started in July 2022 with a three point plan to work towards a viable framework for the volunteers to aid in the restoration and operation of the Theatre. This included three workshops over the year, a detailed volunteer framework and also a detailed set of job descriptions for the role of Volunteer Manager or Co-Ordinator and the evidence to demonstrate the need for this role.

Three training sessions included the main one in March 2023 to bring together the volunteers to understand the type of role they wished in the Co-Ordinator position.

The day was full of team building exercises and volunteer feedback was freely exchanged between the trustees of the Morecambe Winter Gardens and the volunteers who help run the theatre, with great interaction and understanding.

Lots of great ideas were exchanged, which led to a volunteer framework being agreed and set up between CVS and The Morecambe Winter Gardens Preservation Trust which enabled volunteers to sign off any motions carried from the meeting.; these processes and procedures were then agreed upon between The Morecambe Winter Gardens Preservation Trust and the volunteers.



## Overview

The work covered by Mark (Lancaster District CVS) and his team allowed for a greater understanding between the volunteers and the Trust. From this understanding, a general consensus was agreed between the board of trustees and the volunteers and a draft proposal penned by CVS was submitted as part of future funding applications.

## Funding and Training -

Arts Council funding from DCMS and UKSPF from Lancaster City Council in 2023 and 2024 of £3.2 Million of which £209k was revenue included implementation of the volunteer framework, the role of a volunteer co-ordinator amongst other new positions, to enable the Trust to manage the team and secure further training sessions through the revenue programme.

Lancaster and Morecambe college offered free training courses on campus and in-house at the theatre.

Different courses for the theatre were run, these ranged from qualifications [ABTT certificate in stage work and theatre work], to green energy saving workshops for volunteers at their home and to equip each volunteer with training on access/disability whilst in the theatre. All the courses gave the volunteers extra skills and training to help in their volunteering and give added enthusiasm to continue in their volunteering roles.

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING



Members of the volunteering teams took courses such as Food Hygiene, Health and Safety and First Aid, all were offered to key members of the volunteering force of the Morecambe Winter Gardens. Additional training in social media, team building and communication were offered by the college as well as basic skills courses in computing.

As well as the fundamental skills needed for the theatre ensuring the volunteers safety in the building, further funding was found for specific funded activities to support training such as Mosaic Flooring and Stained Glass Window work from additional grants with key workshops introduced.

**Policies:-** Based on the Framework set up by the collaboration with CVS, the theatre has implemented guidelines and policies which the volunteer has had to understand, learn and acknowledge before they continue on their volunteer journey at the theatre.

This has helped with their recruitment process and given a much-needed structure to the volunteering work they do at the theatre.

With CVS's help they have added key initiatives and processes to ensure their volunteering service is fully functional and properly implemented. Examples of this initiative include the use of the Duty Managers File to help with our front of house profile to help and guide new volunteers with the more senior volunteers running important areas of the theatre such as The Cafe to help fundraise and get much needed funds to run the theatre. They have also made each volunteer aware of the key health and safety policies they need to implement to ensure a safe working environment.

*'We have lots of important procedures in place to ensure cleanliness and hygiene in the theatre and to protect volunteers from harmful substances used in the theatre. We have also offered much needed people skills to help volunteers have the confidence to interact with the general public.'*

Recent funding secured from the Theatres Trust for an access audit and training course for their volunteers to aid them in working with people with disabilities is an exciting development.



The current position of Volunteer Co-ordinator has now been integrated across the Trustees and also within the Duty Manager structure with their Events Manager and Data Support now managing the Restoration and Maintenance Volunteers in the week and the Trustees and Duty Management team managing the weekend and events team. The work done by CVS enabled The Morecambe Winter Gardens helped understand the needs of the volunteers, in the context of what the trust requires to generate interest and income into the building.

General reference point guidelines were offered to the Trust with the help and guidance of Lancaster District CVS. The ongoing responsibility of the Trust and the general offer of volunteering at the theatre were agreed upon by both parties to ensure there was a safe and nurturing environment for the volunteers to be maintained at the theatre allowing the volunteers to get the best experience out of their volunteering at the theatre.

The Morecambe Winter Gardens Preservation Trust were offered a detailed framework by CVS to be set up to protect and promote the interests of the volunteers. With CVS's guidance; all volunteers were supported and helped during this time.

**King’s Award for Voluntary Services.**

Lancaster District CVS also nominated the Morecambe Winter Gardens Preservation Trust for the KAVS then known as the QAVS. This nomination was accepted by Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and a detailed process of inspection, checking of all paperwork and governance, interviews with the volunteers and a report submitted for final nomination on behalf of Lancashire. This was awarded in the winter of 2023 and renamed the King’s Award for Voluntary Service due to the death of the Queen.

*‘Without the support and work undertaken by Mark and the wider team at Lancaster CVS and the faith they showed in us this would not have been possible.’*



**Continued support from Lancaster District CVS**

The Morecambe Winter Gardens use the CVS network for volunteering opportunities often both online and also through the CVS directly, maintaining the relationship to enable services for their community, visitors and residents They currently have two requests including the Restoration maintenance and Weekend Volunteers.

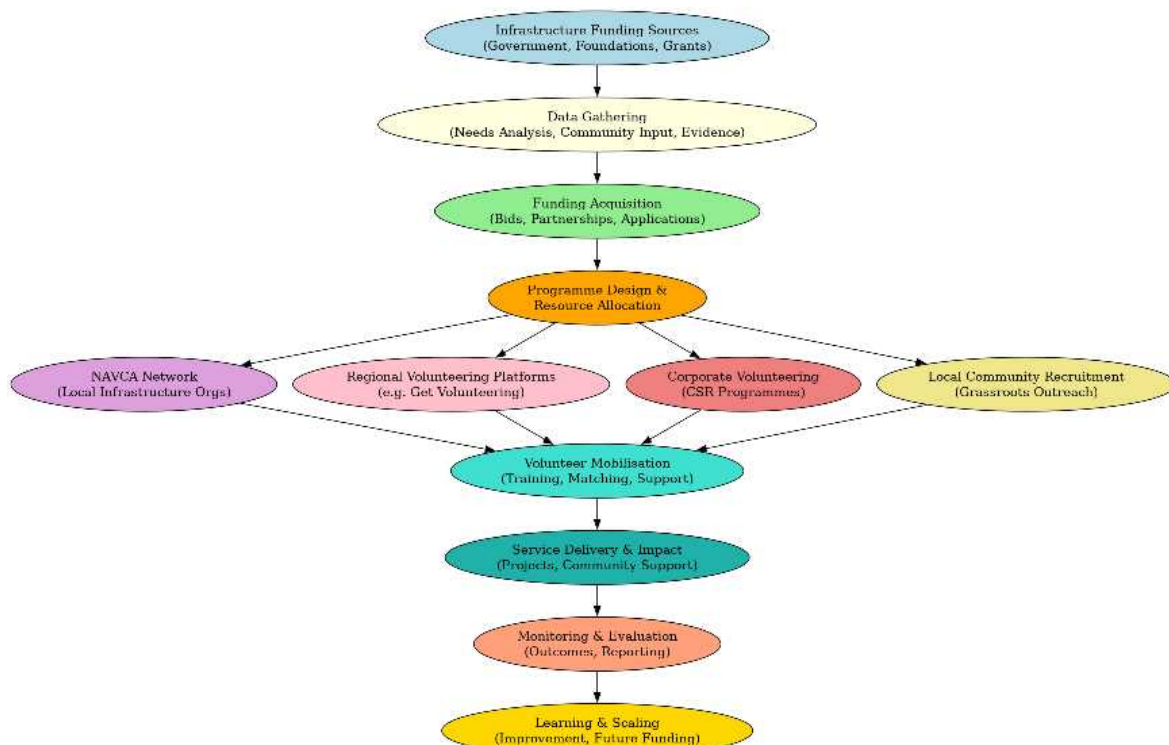
## The importance of Data Gathering

Data gathering is essential for organisations in the third sector and for infrastructure bodies because it provides the evidence needed to demonstrate impact, improve services, and advocate for communities. NAVCA states that *“we use evidence to demonstrate the value and impact of our members... building the evidence base for local VCSE infrastructure support”* [1.20]. This highlights how data is central to proving the contribution of voluntary organisations and strengthening local systems. Similarly, sector guidance from NCVO explains that organisations need data *“to demonstrate the difference it makes... and be accountable,”* particularly when applying for funding or assessing outcomes [1.21]. From a government perspective, the Charity Commission also emphasises that trust in charities is driven by transparency and evidence, including showing *“where the money goes”* and demonstrating impact, which directly affects public support and donations [1.22]. Together, these perspectives show that data gathering is fundamental for accountability, learning, and maintaining trust across the third sector.

For funders such as the National Lottery and other grant-makers, data gathering is a core requirement because it supports effective monitoring, evaluation, and long-term impact. The National Lottery Heritage Fund explains that evaluation is *“a crucial part of measuring the impact, benefits and legacy of National Lottery investment”* and helps organisations understand achievements and inform future decisions [1.23]. In addition, the National Lottery Community Fund encourages organisations to use evidence and shared tools so they can *“show the bigger picture – and how your activities fit into that”* [1.24]. More broadly, funders require data to ensure accountability; UK funding guidance [1.25] notes that they need evidence to confirm whether money was spent appropriately and whether funded work *“made a genuine difference”*. Overall, this demonstrates that data collection is not just administrative but critical for securing funding, proving impact, and enabling infrastructure organisations to support a more effective and evidence-driven sector.

In developing volunteering specifically, infrastructure organisations are set up to create an enabling environment where volunteering can thrive. This can not happen without it being well resourced and funded. Data gathering is key to this.

Infrastructure organisations do this by promoting opportunities, matching volunteers with organisations through brokerage services, and supporting charities in recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers. They also strengthen volunteering by building networks, fostering collaboration, and providing resources that improve volunteer management practices, ensuring that opportunities are inclusive and accessible. In addition, infrastructure bodies act as connectors between communities, local authorities, and funders, helping to align volunteering with local priorities and increasing participation. This combination of governance support, capacity building, and partnership development allows them to systematically grow and sustain volunteering as a key part of community development. This flow chart shows how important data gathering is to the process of developing volunteering.



## Lancashire's Short Term Action Plan

**Communication**—set up and develop VCFSE led forums and safe spaces for discussions and sharing of best practice; enable the VCFSE voice to be heard at regional and national tables.

**Employment**—work with DWP and LCC through LACVS projects and partners to develop volunteer work placements in VCFSE sector, Develop the volunteer to career pathways and look at how employment is viewed strategically across the county and bring together best practice

**One stop shop**—an accessible online space for volunteer managers, volunteers, groups, organisations, employers, communities etc, to discover answers around volunteering and be able to recruit, train and retain volunteers.

**Volunteer manager tool kit**— a resource for volunteer managers to develop their practice and support them in their day to day duties, driven by their needs.

**Excellence rewarded**— through a kite mark accreditation scheme via infrastructure organisations

**Evaluation**—testing and evidence building against the work we do and reporting this back through forums and reports along the journey.

In direct response to insights and developed alongside our communities. We commit over 2026/2027 to work on

1. building communication within Lancashire, develop spaces for conversations led by VCFSE sector
2. We will develop volunteer to career pathways, developing DWP processes to be attractive to VCFSE and making pathways accessible across Lancashire 12
3. Look to develop an LACVS website with provision to be a one stop shop for volunteer managers, volunteers, residents and more. this will involve feedback from our communities and create a resource we can grow.
4. As part of this we will include an online accessible volunteer managers tool kit, including templates of policy documents, training opportunities, accessible volunteer brokerage led by the needs of volunteer managers.
5. We will develop ways to celebrate volunteering with an accredited kite mark through infrastructure organisations
6. We will continue to evaluate and gather insights to enable us to have quick responses to issues arising. We will monitor any testing we do and be transparent in our results to enable our



## Lancashire's Long Term Vision

- Increased number of residents in volunteering and employment. We know the impact this has is massive for the economy and by people moving into employment we keep them healthy. We will enhance accessibility and engagement through a coordinated “one-stop-shop” marketing approach, supported by a centralised volunteering recruitment platform delivered in partnership with local CVSs and Volunteer Centres. This will be further strengthened through direct collaboration with key partners, including the NHS, Alliance and Local Authorities. To maximise participation, we will ensure a seamless volunteer onboarding experience by offering both digital and in-person sign-up options, making opportunities accessible to all residents. To support effective volunteer-to-career pathways, it is essential to increase the availability of high-quality volunteering opportunities. This will be achieved by working closely with community groups and organisations to ensure they adopt and implement recognised best practices in volunteer management. We will prioritise capacity-building for smaller and volunteer-led organisations by providing access to best practice resources and guidance through digital platforms, alongside targeted support delivered via CVSs and Volunteer Centres.
- VCFSE sector resourced to a level to function efficiently and effectively and enable change. An understanding of the volunteer sector by commissioners is key. Funders need to understand the importance of funding volunteer management and core infrastructure costs and services as part of grant making. Recognising the importance of the volunteer manager role.
- VCFSE sitting alongside other services as equal. Understand the crucial importance of small volunteer led groups as well as larger charities. Giving the smaller groups (in Lancashire 14 we have approx. 10000 organisations in the VCFSE sector and about 80% are small groups) a voice at all levels. The local VCFSE infrastructure organisations to fulfil this need, and they too need to be resourced to enable this. Without the smaller groups and organisations we would lose a future sustainable model for Lancashire.
- Development of resources in communities to enable conversations—each area having a VCFSE led forum for conversations and support, as well as the existing Alliance and forums at regional level, making sure there is the ability for cross local place conversations and understanding of how we develop these conversations and build partnerships.
- Sustainability of small groups and infrastructure who can be their voice at regional and national level. Funders to look at longer term funding—more consistent funding processes—development of funding opportunities in areas with limited infrastructure. Developing understanding of funders for small groups.
- Flourishing communities and reduced inequalities—investment into the sector to grow, and a wider understanding of the support through the VCFSE sector and how vital this is to public and statutory services.

## LONG TERM VISION



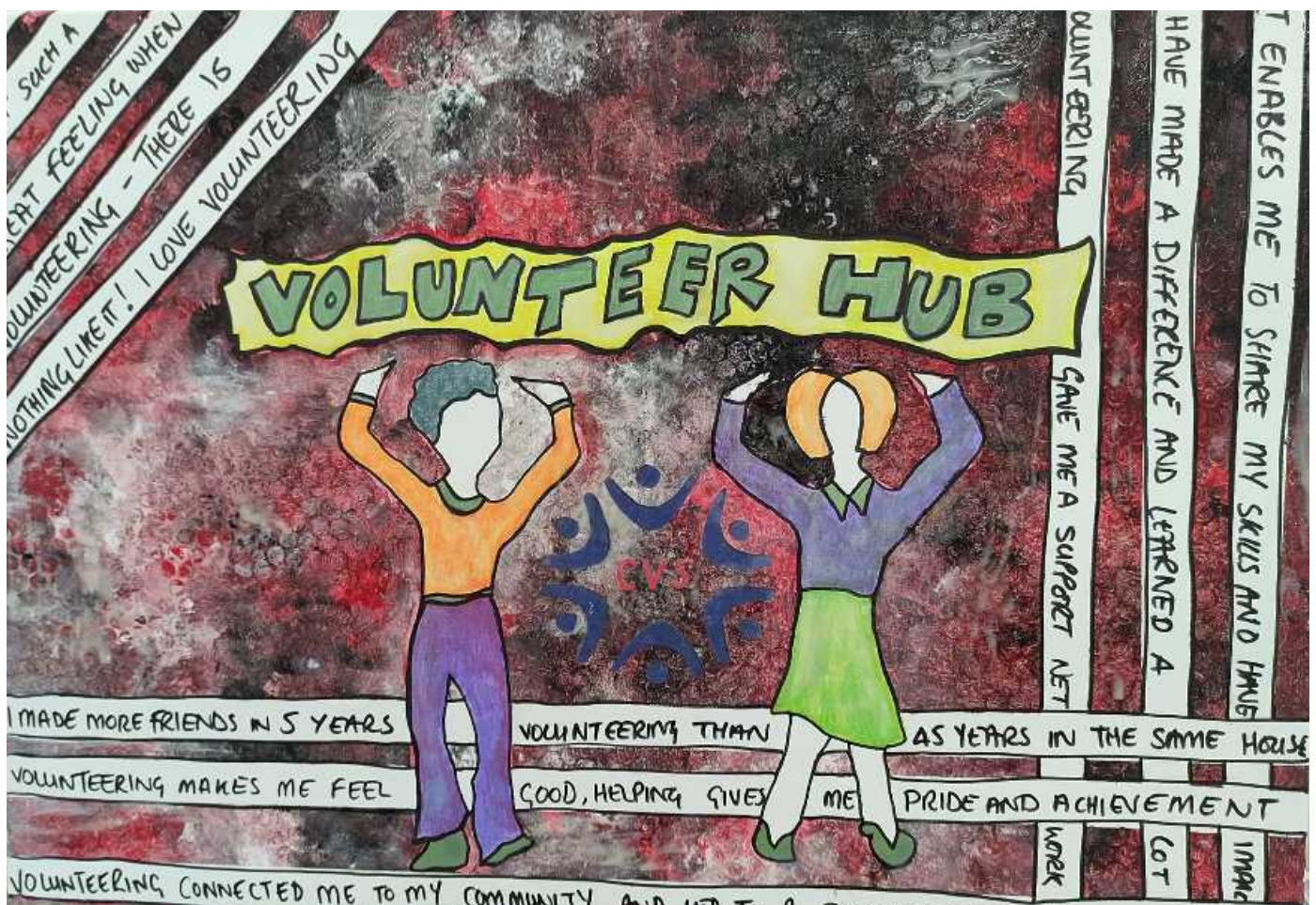


## Conclusion

Our barriers, strategy principles, short term action plans and long term vision are something we will now work with. Over the next number of years in conjunction with national and regional strategies this will give us a VCFSE sector which works productively supporting smaller VCFSE groups in our community as well as charities, whilst working alongside statutory public bodies, businesses, the Council, NHS, educational and employment sectors. In looking at the barriers, we have developed our strategy principles, which have led to our short term and long term goals for what good (health) volunteering looks like in Lancashire and what is needed to deliver this now and in the future.

In developing meaningful change we need to work together, equally with passion and understanding. In conversation we will develop an intrinsic understanding of the challenges and ways of working ensuring a well resourced infrastructure to enable volunteering to flourish, through to partnership development where we support each other.

In Lancashire we are looking at the strategic way we can develop volunteering and enable joint working across sectors to developing a strong Lancashire framework using the best from all areas. The volunteering sector is confident to shout about their successes (something we aim to make easier through development of Lancashire wide data sharing platforms). We look to each other to work through challenges though mechanisms such as the Lancashire volunteer managers forum and at a higher level the LSC VCFSE Alliance. We are proud of this and want to show the meaningful and vital work volunteers do on a daily basis to enable a healthy community and all that comes from this, including the benefits to the NHS. This strategy has been developed through the voices of many hundreds of people. It comes from those who have a lifetime of volunteering and developing the VCFSE sector to enable health creation. Volunteering needs to be an intrinsic part of workforce planning and embedded into the system in a sustainable way.



Art work based on the question 'how does volunteering make you feel?'

## Appendix

- 1.1 [A VCFSE sector Manifesto for Lancashire](#)
- 1.2 [Estimating the economic and social value of volunteering - GOV.UK \[A1.2.2\]](#)
- 1.3 [Common Health Assets | Glasgow Caledonian University | Scotland, UK](#)
- 1.4 [Vision for Volunteering](#)
- 1.5 [Community Life Survey 2024/25: Volunteering and charitable giving - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.6 [VCSE Barometer Survey | Nottingham Trent University](#)
- 1.7 [NHS Volunteer Workforce Data Collection - NHS England Digital](#)
- 1.8 [The state of strategic relationships between councils and their local voluntary and community sector | Local Government Association](#)
- 1.9 [NAVCA-providing-the-support-infrastructure-1.pdf](#)
- 1.10 [Working with Local Infrastructure Organisations to engage smaller VCFSE organisations: Good practice guide | Local Government Association](#)
- 1.11 [Neighbourhood health framework - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.12 [10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.13 [www.morecambewintergardens.co.uk](#)
- 1.14 [\[news.lanca...ire.gov.uk\]](#)
- 1.15 [publicnow.com](#)
- 1.16 [council.la...ire.gov.uk\]](#)
- 1.17 [\[reformlanc...hire.co.uk\]](#)
- 1.18 [hellorayo.co.uk](#)
- 1.19 [\[council.la...ire.gov.uk\]](#)
- 1.20 [NAVCA | Research](#)
- 1.21 [Data and insight | NCVO](#)
- 1.22 [Charity transparency data research report - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.23 [Evaluation good practice guidance | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)
- 1.24 [Tools to help you gather and use evidence and learning | The National Lottery Community Fund](#)
- 1.25 [What Evidence Do Funders Require from UK Charities? | Complete Guide | Plinth](#)



Pride in my Community, youth group collage



*'volunteering is about community, breaking down barriers and connecting people together. It makes us healthy in mind body and spirit. '*



Volunteering in Lancashire is flourishing and we see most volunteering has health at it's forefront, be it the health and wellbeing of the volunteers, those their volunteering impacts on and the wider community. Selfless acts of kindness that improve the health of our community are seen across Lancashire and should be celebrated on a daily basis.

To discuss this document or health volunteering in Lancashire 12 you can contact the Volunteering for Health Lead for Lancashire 12, Lisa Ross on [lisa.ross@bprcvs.co.uk](mailto:lisa.ross@bprcvs.co.uk)



Just some of the hundreds of organisations who have played a part in the creation of this document